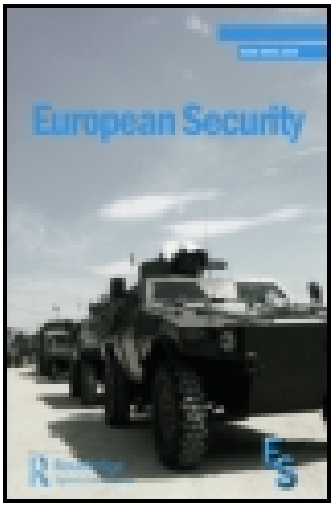

European Security
Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/feus20

Voluntary organizations and society-military relations in contemporary Russia

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Published online: 29 Oct 2014.

European Security, 2014
http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2014.968134

Voluntary organizations and society–military relations in contemporary Russia

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(*Received 4 March 2014; final version received 18 September 2014*)

The 2014 crisis in Ukraine has refocused attention on Russia as a European security actor. Despite showing renewed military capability, compared to the post-Soviet period, Russian society–military relations have remained the same. This relationship (between society and the security organs) provides the key context for assessing security. Analysis of everyday militarization and the role of voluntary organizations (such as DOSAAF [*Dobrovol'noe obshchestvo sodeistviya armii, aviatsii i flotu*] and Nashi [*Molodezhnoe demokraticheskoe antifashistskoe dvizheni*]) in supporting the military can provide an important insight into Russian behaviour as a security actor. These organizations generate a pro-military outlook and at the same time provide training and activities, thus contributing to military effectiveness by developing the competency of young people prior to military service as well as increasing public knowledge of military affairs. However, strong support for the military, a lack of independent information, and an absence of a shared vision on how society–military relations should be developed and also represent political challenges in terms of everyday militarization. This dynamic is important for understanding both Russia's security posture and wider security implications for Europe.

Keywords: Russia; security; militarization; voluntary organizations

Introduction

The crisis in Ukraine (2014) has focused attention on Russia as a European security actor. Russian actions and responses have included destabilization; exerting pressure with energy, and trade penalties and incentives; a flexible concept of sovereignty; faux-democratic mechanisms (e.g. supporting referenda); controlling information flow (domestically); and physically controlling territory using military means. The last of these actions is particularly interesting. Military capability and the political decision to use military force, to protect Russian interests, needs to be examined within the context of society–military relations (the relationship between society and the security organs). Russian military capability has improved during the post-Soviet period, and in particular, under Putin. In the short term, following the mixed performance of the military during the Georgian War (2008), restructuring and modernization of equipment have started to show positive results. However, society–military relations need to be further examined to provide a deeper insight into Russian and European security.

In their post-Soviet form, Russian society–military relations have proven challenging to characterize.[1] Under Yeltsin (1991–1999) many preconditions for military intervention

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in politics were present: chronic underfunding, the legacy of withdrawal from Afghanistan (1989), setbacks in the First Chechen War (1994–1996), and loss of social standing and prestige. However, analysts struggled to explain why Russia failed to develop western patterns of society–military relations, including liberal-democratic mechanisms of civilian control, yet at the same time avoided extensive military intervention in politics (such as a successful coup).[2] Putin's first presidency (2000–2008) was also somewhat ambiguous. Despite his security background, perceived success in the Second Chechen War (1999–2009), increased defence budgets, and the centralized power *vertikal*, Putin was unable to achieve meaningful defence reform. Medvedev's presidency (2008–2012) saw deficiencies in military performance in the Georgian War (2008) which was followed by a reform programme focused on personnel issues, modernization, and procurement, but no progress was made in developing more effective society–military relations.

Since Putin's return to the presidency (2012) modernization, procurement, and corruption have remained as the significant challenges in society–military relations. Moreover, issues such as acts of brutality against conscripts, military recruitment, international disputes (e.g. Syria), military action in Ukraine (2014), defence industry's investments, and the dismissal of Anatolii Serdyukov as Minister of Defence, all emphasize the pressing need to better understand contemporary Russian society–military relations and its wider implications for European security. This paper will contribute to this process by examining the question: What role do voluntary organizations fulfil in the development of Russian society–military relations?

Three central weaknesses undermine the analysis in much of the literature[3] when applied to contemporary Russia. First, the application of a democratic framework derived from western experiences (Feaver 2003, Betz 2004, Bruneau and Tollefson 2006, Peven 2008). This has the effect of treating a departure from the western ideal as suboptimal, rather than as an alternative. Second, a false dichotomy of internal (e.g. police) and external (e.g. armed forces) security organs is maintained, which often favours the external forces (Huntington 1957, Barany 2012). This ignores insights from critical security perspectives (Campbell 1992, p. 8, Bigo 2008, p. 11) and skews the fundamental research puzzle: the challenge of maintaining effective state coercive organs whilst protecting society from that coercive power. As tasking has developed (for example, armed forces carrying out humanitarian operations), the internal or external focus of the institution has become less important than the fact that personnel are armed and skilled in the management of violence. Third, the literature does not fully develop the sub-elite level of analysis (Gomart 2008, Brannon 2009). This is a particular challenge for analysis of society–military relations in states where there is limited societal feedback through formal political institutions.

Recent additions to the literature by Zoltan Barany (2012) and Dale Herspring (2013) have started to move things forward. Both works are comparative, building on Russian expertise, and offer new analytical frameworks for considering Russian society–military relations, which address the weaknesses identified in the literature. Although it uses a democratic framework, Barany's work analyzes 27 countries and provides insight into states with a legacy of state socialism. However, the framework does not move beyond a narrow conceptualization of the military or develop the sub-elite level of analysis (Barany 2012, p. 11). Herspring (2013, p. 1) takes a different approach: examining USA, Germany, Canada, and Russia, he develops the concept of "shared responsibility", arguing that "conflict in the relationship between the civilian and the military is normal,

positive and healthy, provided it is regulated". An advantage of his approach is that it does not rely on a democratic baseline. Instead, it builds on the insights of work on the USSR that analyzed effective civil–military relations within an authoritarian, militarized state (Kolkowicz 1967, Odom 1978, Colton 1979). Herspring (2013, p. 13) states that "a country may be nondemocratic and still have civil-military relations marked by a shared relationship". However, his framework could be strengthened by creating flexibility to include the full range of state security institutions (i.e. those beyond the Ministry of Defence [MOD]), by developing the sub-elite level of analysis and by further enhancing the idea of military culture reflecting the culture of a wider society (Herspring 2013, p. 7).

My approach develops the society–military interface (SMI) introduced by Stephen Webber and Mathers (2006). It examines society–military relations in terms of militarization, the process by which the military organization[4] exerts primacy over the needs of society.[5] The weakness of the existing literature, in failing to examine the sub-elite level of analysis, will be challenged by focusing on everyday militarization[6] in this paper. Voluntary organizations provide an insight into society–military relations as they are a means of generating support for the military and increased legitimacy for the state. Groups such as DOSAAF[7] (Voluntary Society for Cooperation with the Army, Aviation and Fleet – *Dobrovol'noe obshchestvo sodeistviya armii, aviatsii i flotu*) and Nashi[8] (Youth Democratic Anti-Fascist Movement – "Ours!"; *Molodezhnoe demokraticheskoe antifashistskoe dvizhenie* – "Nashi") receive national, political, and public attention. In addition to this, international media reporting often perceives these groups as evidence of a return to Soviet patterns of governance under Putin. However, the functional role that voluntary organizations fulfil and the degree to which they reflect political ideology and societal ideals must be understood. Moreover, the development of new structures such as the Popular Front (*Obshcherossiiskii narodnyi front za Rossiyu* – ONF), post-Nashi youth organizations (projects under the rebranded Nashi umbrella structure the All-Russian Youth Community – *Vserossiiskim soobshchestvom molodezhi*), and new political parties (Smart Russia) demonstrate the importance of this topic. It is only by analyzing daily interactions at the sub-elite level that contemporary Russian society–military relations can be fully examined and the security implications for Russia and Europe be put into context.

I argue that the social aggregate of militarization should be included in analysis to understand Russian society–military relations. It provides an additional perspective to orthodox indicators of militarization such as a growing defence budget and large-scale military recruitment. As a key indicator within the social aggregate of militarization, everyday militarization is a defining characteristic of Russian society–military relations and therefore an important factor to be considered when assessing Russia as a security actor. Voluntary organizations such as DOSAAF and Nashi provide education, training, support for the elites, and develop a pro-military value pattern. On the other hand, support for the military without scrutiny, an absence of independent information, and the lack of a shared vision of effective society–military relations represent challenges to society in terms of militarization. Military reform and modernization during the post-Soviet period has not significantly changed society–military relations, which have to be understood by other European security actors to assess and plan for Russian security priorities and responses.

First, the paper will outline the core concepts and issues: SMI, social aggregate of militarization, everyday militarization, voluntary organizations, and the level of public support for the military. Second, an assessment of established organizations such as

DOSAAF, Nashi, and of new structures will be presented. The SMI allows a mixed methodology to be employed; for this paper, official documents, public opinion data, and media sources are combined to provide evidence supporting my argument.

Concepts: SMI and everyday militarization

Three connected concepts are needed to examine the research question: SMI, social militarization, and everyday militarization. The first element to note about the SMI is the broadening of *civil*–military to *society*–military, which signifies an attempt to move beyond the narrow focus on civilian control and democratic ideals. As suggested earlier, the need to examine the sub-elite level of analysis is supported by the SMI: "society-military relations refers to *all* aspects of the interface between civilian sources and the military sphere, in the political, economic, social, symbolic and cultural realms" (Webber and Mathers 2006, p. 2). The SMI allows a wide range of indicators to be assessed, including both those from traditional perspectives themselves and those indicators that are underdeveloped by the existing literature. Militarization is the central concept of the SMI. The definition of militarization adopted here is derived from Vagts (1938), Andreski (1968), and Webber and Mathers (2006) and holds that militarization is a process by which the military exerts primacy over society.

The central concept of militarization can be divided into aggregates (social, physical, economic, and political). Aggregates are comprised of individual indicators orientated around the notion of a burden placed on society and the definition of militarization outlined above (e.g. a large defence budget can exert an economic burden on society as there is less funding available for health, education, and infrastructure). These aggregates are useful because they can be applied to both democratic and authoritarian states. The focus of this paper is everyday militarization, an indicator within the social aggregate of militarization, which is concerned with the daily interaction between the military and the public. It should be considered a defining characteristic of Russian society–military relations. Everyday militarization concentrates attention on organizations such as DOSAAF and Nashi that are focused on supporting the military organization (this can be functional – education and training; material – providing resources; ideological – promoting the military). People directly engage with these institutions on a voluntary basis as part of their daily life. Nashi and DOSAAF should be analyzed because both organizations could be considered to have a patriotic "value pattern", with DOSAAF adopting a sharper focus on the military (Odom 1973, pp. 5–8).[9] In addition to value patterns, the "non-collective benefit" provided by these organizations (such as education) is an important element that will be examined in this paper (Odom 1973, p. 12).

Finally, before Nashi and DOSAAF are examined, the extent of support for the military must be established. Public opinion data can provide an insight into social militarization. A University of Glasgow, "Russia 2010 Survey" show that the armed forces have a high level of support among 49% of the respondents (second only to the President). The data from earlier surveys (2000–2010) also show high levels of support with an average of 47% (low support = 30%, neutral = 21%, don't know = 3%) during the Soviet period.[10] A Levada Centre (2013) study found that respondents felt that the armed forces could defend Russia from a military threat; during the Medvedev presidency (2008–2012), the level of positive responses did not fall below 59%. Together the statistics support the conclusion that support for the military has endured throughout the post-Soviet period.

Supporting the contemporary military: Nashi to post-Nashi

Nashi quickly started to receive attention, particularly from the western media, during Putin's centralization of power. Due to its vociferous support for Putin, parallels are drawn with the Union of Communist Youth (Komsomol – *Vsesoyuznyi Leninskii kommunisticheskii soyuz molodezhi*) and Young Pioneers (*Vsesoyuznaya pionerskaya organizatsiya imeni Vladimira Lenina*), although membership levels are drastically different. Nashi members were estimated to peak at 100,000 in 2006. Social media platforms also provide an insight into further public engagement. Nashi has approximately 2500 followers on Twitter (@su_nashi), Smart Russia has approximately 500 followers on Twitter (@umnros), and 1700 members on vkontakte.[11] Social media engagement for comparable UK organizations such as the UK Scout Association, army cadets, sea cadets, and Air cadets stands at approximately 30,000, 4700, 3400, and 8000 twitter followers, respectively.[12] Contemporary memberships (including social media) are a fraction of those for Soviet-era organizations. Komsomol membership grew from 2 million in 1927 to 34 million in 1986 and Pioneer membership was approximately 23 million in 1970 (Armstrong 1978, p. 68, Kenez 1985, p. 169, Lovell 2010, p. 166).

Nashi's strong links to the state and its role in supporting Putin and Medvedev suggest that it be considered a public organization. It developed from a pre-existing youth group, Walking Together, led by Vasilii Yakemenko and it boasted Kremlin-aide Vladislav Surkov as a patron. Nashi was originally reported as being sponsored by business but it developed close ties to the Federal Agency for Youth Affairs (*Federal'noe agentstvo po delam molodezhi – Rosmolodezh*'), particularly through the funding of several joint projects and initiatives. Nashi emerged in 2005 at high-profile national events. The rally "Our Victory" was held just prior to the celebrations around the 60th anniversary of victory in the Great Patriotic War (Second World War). The Nashi event and wider participation (in Victory Day celebrations) included meeting with veterans, speeches, a march, and several remembrance events. Generating links between Second World War veterans and young people became a key feature of Nashi's activities to support their manifesto and wider patriotic ideology (value pattern). The Seliger Youth Forum (2005) included military-style fitness training and participants maintained a commemorative eternal flame. Ideological development and patriotic education provisions were the core elements that supported a pro-military value pattern.

In April 2012 reports emerged that Nashi would be rebranded and refocused, and that some projects would be shut down (Kuzmenkova and Vinokurova 2012). There have been a number of developments during this transition process. Yakemenko announced that he was starting a new group, "Sincerely Yours" (*Iskrenne vashi*). Statements by Rosmolodezh have suggested a change in funding strategy, for example reducing the prominence of Seliger and adopting a more balanced approach to running summer camps (Glikin and Biriukova 2013). The Smart Russia party (*Umnaya Rossiya*) has been created, led by an ex-Nashi leader, as a youth-focused party. The new "Nashi" brand was unveiled as the – All-Russian Youth Community (Sivkova 2013).[13]

Prior to the emergence of the rebranded Nashi, individual projects[14] operated somewhat autonomously. Some social projects have been developed with involvement from Nashi members. The project "Stop 'em" (*Stop Kham*) has been successful in generating media coverage and securing funding through presidential grants (Presidential Decree 2013). It provides an instructive model for developing post-Nashi structures and support for the military, being a crowd-sourced project to improve driving standards and

publicize traffic infractions. In terms of content, video clips of incidents and confrontations are posted on its website (Stopxam.ru) and form the basis of a TV show (*Urban War*). Social media also comprises an element of the project which is well-represented across Russian and US platforms. The project generates a lot of user interaction and the number of vkontakte followers (approximately 350,000) proves how successful it has been.[15] Therefore, as an example of engagement with young people, on a voluntary basis, outside state structures, it is a useful model that can be adapted to develop pro-military voluntary organizations.

Our Common Victory (*Nasha obshchaya pobeda*) is a pro-military project (2010–2015) which supports the physical commemoration events and activities which Nashi and Rosmolodezh carry out, such as those for Victory Day. Its website (41–45.su) is comprised of three elements: social media interaction and apps, text-based content ("Memories" –snippets of veteran's experience of the war and an interactive encyclopaedia), and video content (Your Film About the War – *Tvoi film o voine*). The project website is linked from both the Rosmolodezh website (which lists a large number of partners on the project, including Nashi, businesses, and other state organs) and the Nashi website, through its project page for Your Film About the War. The latter is a project where activists film veterans speaking about their experience of Second World War and upload them to the website creating an online history project which supports physical commemoration activities. The project has been successful so far. It is actively updated and social media activity suggests that young people are engaging with the concept. Although it is a national project and supports high-profile contributions to Victory Day celebrations, the regional dimension is prominent. There is a competitive element to video submissions as a regional breakdown of contributions can be accessed through the website. The social media dimension provides additional insight and audiences; Our Common Victory boasts approximately 12,000 followers on vkontakte and 450 on Twitter (@41_45_su).[16]

The first aim of Your Film About the War is to create a repository of knowledge about Second World War for future generations, and the second is to challenge the falsification of history and to combat those who publish misinformation about the war (the aims are outlined on the Nashi website and on the project website). The project directly reinforces the ideology outlined in the Nashi manifesto and resonates with the politics of United Russia and Putin. At its heart, the project promotes intergenerational links and the notion that young people owe a debt to the defenders of the motherland. The salience of countering the falsification of history was recently demonstrated by the backlash against *Dozhd TV* (Rain TV). Despite publishing an apology, *Dozhd TV* was boycotted in the wake of extensive public and state criticism over the creation of a poll asking if Leningrad should have been surrendered to the Nazis during Second World War in order to save lives (Zygar 2014).[17]

The issue shows not only the difficulty in developing knowledge and alternative perspectives on key issues, but also the extent of support for military and the potential for projects that adopt mutually reinforcing digital and physical components. The challenge is to apply this to achieve tangible results (e.g. recruiting personnel and developing the security economy). Your Film About the War shows potential as a model for the elite as they try to engage young people. The ideological underpinning supporting the military, creation of a narrative, and the mobilization of people in support of the state are appealing characteristics. Moreover, the combination of physical events (e.g. pro-government protests and commemoration events) with the digital (online projects and social media

activity), represents a more sophisticated approach to engaging with young people. This is particularly useful during transition where organizations are disappearing or being created and where opposition groups have been quicker to utilize digital methodologies.

Supporting the contemporary military: DOSAAF

DOSAAF has not received the same level of attention as Nashi. This is surprising given the political prominence and media coverage of the military modernization process and the frequent scandals involving the military organization (principally the armed forces and police), and the focus on *siloviki* appointments under Putin. DOSAAF maintains an active website but has a limited social media presence on Facebook and Twitter.[18] On the other hand, the DOSAAF page (Dosaaf Rossii) on vkontakte is actively updated and shows engagement with the public; pictures and videos of DOSAAF activities and events are uploaded frequently, in addition to details about upcoming events and initiatives. The main vkontakte account is integrated with social media accounts and the activities of regional DOSAAF branches with cross-posted material and media. However, compared with other voluntary organizations and state bodies discussed earlier, DOSAAF has under-utilized the technology and there is potential to improve in this area, developing the digital tools to support its value pattern as well as training and education work.

DOSAAF not only provides individual benefits to members in terms of education and training, but it also has a more formal public institutional role in the provision of military education and pre-draft training. Defence Minister Shoigu is also the chairman of the DOSAAF Supervisory Board so the development of DOSAAF is directly influenced by the state. Moreover, the state's role, both as a funder and through the Supervisory Board, was outlined by Shoigu: "the Supervisory Board is developing a strategy for the development of the voluntary society, coordination of activities and helping secure federal and regional budget funding and financial oversight" (DOSAAF Website 2013). DOSAAF activities involve a wide range of daily interactions between the military and society such as driving and motorsport, shooting, physical training, lectures and seminars, technical training, flying and parachuting, running sports teams and museums, carrying out patriotic education, conducting pre-conscription youth training, and the administration of a lottery and competitions.

Two elements of DOSAAF's role should be noted: providing patriotic education for wider society and being a mobilization resource for the military organization, primarily through the training of young people prior to being drafted. These responsibilities are outlined within the DOSAAF charter[19] (DOSAAF Website 2010). Beyond these core elements, the charter outlines DOSAAF's duty to train the public to work in defence industries, contribute to disaster relief, and develop technical and military skills. It also sets out an extensive list of duties and a commitment to disseminating information to increase the prestige of the military (Medvedev 2011a, 2011b, DOSAAF Website 2011b, 2011c). DOSAAF can be utilized to communicate ideology and generate support for the armed forces (for example through commemoration at events such as Victory Day and maintaining museums). It can offer members an appealing collective goal (a strong military organization and engagement with the national project) and individual benefits (such as participating in sports, learning skills). Thus, the organizational approach provides an advantage over broader media manipulation or control in so far as the values of, and interests in, military projects are likely to be held by the membership.

Cuts in the armed forces have implications for maintaining an effective military organization, a fundamental element of society–military relations. In 2012, the MOD depended on the officer corps and the draft to maintain the current force structure (rather than the training of sergeants and the recruitment of contract soldiers as planned in 2008). The reduction of military service to one year will have a negative effect on standards in so far as the period of training has also been reduced to three months of combat training prior to moving to units. This is problematic, not simply due to the reduction in duration, but also due to the condensing of training programmes, which must remain effective in the new format. Moreover, the issue is linked to education and pre-draft preparation as live firing and fitness training needs to be accompanied by instruction and practice on the new equipment and systems which are the focus of the modernization programme. If this training is deficient it will exacerbate a "skills gap" as use of more complex equipment requires a higher level of education and training. Moreover, with the centralization of military education, the need for pre-service training is necessary for future contract servicemen (*kontraktniki*), as they could be deployed on active duty to combat zones early in their period of service.[20]

Considering the views of figures such as Medvedev (2011b) and Sergei Fridinsky (Chief Military Prosecutor 2011), it would appear that preventing scandals (characterized by corruption and violence)[21] and tackling their underlying causes through education and training are a priority. Strategic planning documents have been approved which address these issues in the form of federal programmes such as "Programme – Reform of the system of military education in Russia for the period to 2010"; and the "Strategy of Social Development of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation for the period to 2020". Military education in schools already has a legal basis enshrined by the Law on Education (2005). Moreover, training and education have received a high profile in speeches and statements by Medvedev (2011b) and Putin (2012).

There are two different elements to consider: pre-draft patriotic education and training, and the in-service training and education system that had been reformed as part of the modernization programme (launched under Medvedev's presidency). DOSAAF could take a more active role to help reduce violence carried out by conscripts,[22] as it would be able to educate young people prior to their military service. Second, it shapes the narrative of "the military" and military service and so could challenge the acceptance of abuse. That said, DOSAAF has had a role in the development of the post-Soviet military (and in earlier forms of the Soviet armed forces), yet abuse is still widespread.[23] Moreover, given the endemic nature of this problem, and its tacit acceptance as a control mechanism within the military, a more robust social, educational, and legal approach is required.

In 2012, at the end of the Medvedev presidency, Putin outlined the role of DOSAAF in his new administration:

> It is necessary to organize at a qualitatively new level, work on military-patriotic education of schoolboys, the development of military-applicable kinds of sports and physical training as a whole. Military service lasts one year, and soldiers should concentrate entirely on combat training. This means they should come to the Army physically developed and, even better, having the basic skills to work with technical equipment, computers and information technologies. I would like to note, linked to this, the state importance of work carried out by DOSAAF. (Putin 2012)

Military–patriotic education and the provision of training continue to be DOSAAF's key functions. As noted in the statement, the reduction in the length of military service and focus on combat training demands that pre-draft some preparation is undertaken. This could be considered the state's solution to the "skills gap" noted earlier. Therefore, at a functional level, DOSAAF is an important institution for draftees (preparing them for military service) and for the state (in making sure its conscripts are trained sufficiently), and therefore important when exploring the social aggregate of militarization.

Following his appointment to the DOSAAF board Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu reiterated the significance of DOSAAF: "growth in the DOSAAF organization continues to strengthen its ranks and to promote a general federal system of preparing citizens for military service" (DOSAAF Website 2013). Shoigu has made very few changes to the reform package enacted by Serdyukov: focusing on elements that are popular with the military, exercises to test readiness, returning military promotions to the military, and wearing military uniform when meeting with the senior officers. These superficial changes give a sense of a return to stability rather than the ambitious targets and lack of discussion that marked Serdyukov's tenure at the MOD. That said, the modernization targets have not changed. Moreover, Shoigu is still faced with the same challenges as Serdyukov: personnel recruitment and the draft (especially meeting contract service targets e.g. 241,000 in 2013, 295,000 in 2014), rearmament (modernization of 19% of equipment in 2013 and 26% in 2014), and reducing corruption and increasing transparency (MOD Website 2013). Reductions in basic training have focused attention on the role of DOSAAF's pre-draft role in preparing future recruits for military service. Whilst these developments could be perceived as positive, the lack of transparency and debate, and the strong top-down influence reinforce everyday militarization, as the state and the military organization expand their presence in the public sphere. Supporting DOSAAF is logical in terms of the modernization programme, in particular in trying to improve the quality of recruit with less basic training following the draft.

Supporting the contemporary military: further developments

The development of the Popular Front and post-Nashi projects, such as Our Common Victory, support the national project of a strong Russia and so have an intrinsic value to the state. The Smart Russia manifesto is notable because it is essentially both pro-Putin and post-Putin; focusing on the political direction of the country in 2018 and 2024 (Smart Russia 2013). This can be distinguished from the Popular Front, which is simply pro-Putin. The platform is linked to questions of society–military relations. A pro-military value pattern and a desire for a strong Russia risk a lack of commitment to constructive policy, critical thinking, and commitment to oversight. However, it can also support more effective society–military relations (founded on greater knowledge and public engagement; a demand for transparency and stronger oversight). The lack of debate about the substance on what the aims are and how they are to be achieved makes any progress more challenging. In contrast, the Soviet period saw core issues of society–military relations debated by key actors. Trotsky and Frunze took opposing views on the relationship between society and the state's coercive organs. Trotsky argued that the needs of society fundamentally superseded those of the military (Trotsky 1925, p. xi), whereas Frunze's writing argued that society should be directed in support of making the Soviet state an armed camp (Frunze 1934, pp. 9–25).

The creation of the Voluntary Movement of the Popular Front in support of the Army, Navy and Defence-Industrial Complex (*Dobrovol'cheskogo dvizheniya v podderzhku armii, i flota* – *OPK*) should be noted because of its stated purpose: supporting the defence industry and military modernization. As a social movement, it is intended to create a broad political base for the modernization of the defence industry to create new technology projects for the military (Medvedev 2013). Whilst specific technical initiatives such as the creation of a "Russian DARPA" (referring to the US Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency) and the Foundation for Advanced Studies (*Fond perspektivnykh issledovanii* – FPI) will be more directly useful, in this case dispersing funds for cutting-edge research, developing and mobilizing a broader political base will make work in the sector more prestigious (Medvedev 2013).

Whilst information released about the voluntary movement so far are heavy on targets and light on plans and processes, it has potential. It could be seen as comparable with the Movement in Support of the Army, Defence Industry and Military Science (*Dvizheniya v podderzhku armii, oboronnoi promyshlennosti i voennoi nauki* – DPA). However, the new movement has flexible structure (like the main Popular Front) which marks it apart from the DPA, which is more focused on veteran issues and previously served as an electoral bloc (1999). It is significant that in addition to Putin and Medvedev's leadership in defence affairs, the movement and the general improvement of the defence industry is the responsibility of Dmitrii Rogozin. He was personally identified with the issue before the new social movement was announced, which is evidenced by his responsibilities as the Deputy Prime Minister and through government structures such as the Military Industrial Commission (*Voenno-promyshlennaya komissiya* – VPK).

The close integration between the state and the new organization was outlined by Putin in relation to both DOSAAF and the new movement:

> Federal, regional and municipal authorities should render all support of this organization [DOSAAF] in realising the tasks assigned to it. It is necessary to unite the efforts of the state and public structures. In this way, I support the idea of the creation the creation of the Voluntary Movement of the Popular Front in support of the Army, Navy and Defence-Industrial Complex. (Putin 2012)

This approach, to integrate the public and the state (by using voluntary organizations such as DOSAAF and Voluntary Movement of the Popular Front in support of the Army, Navy, and Defence-Industrial Complex) constitutes a step towards achieving the "common goal" of an effective military organization. However, it is still in the early stages of incorporation with the defence economy, and the effects of reforms in military training and education will take some time to be understood. The approach to integration taken by Russia provides support for examining the social aggregate of militarization by looking at indicators such as everyday militarization. However, by not engaging with the deeper issues, support for the military does not translate into a specific shared vision of how society–military relations should be orientated.

Society–military relations have implications both for Russian security and Europe. Everyday militarization, where the military exerts influence on interactions with society has both positive and negative consequences. Voluntary organizations, by generating support for the state and the military and by promoting a pro-military outlook, have not developed the expertise and willingness to challenge the military on issues such as corruption and preventing *dedovshchina* by demanding greater transparency and accountability. So, by

providing training, they strengthen the skills of young people prior to their military service obligations. In addition, their staunch support helps the military politically, (for example, as it competes for funding) and allows policy-makers greater freedom. Whilst the broader vision for society–military relations is unclear, it is certain that military power is a core element of Putin's project to develop a "strong Russia" in global politics. Freedom in policy-making has proven to be particularly useful for securitizing issues (for example, Russian ethnicity and linguistic or cultural links) and tapping into the images and narratives of past military glories. The state has also been successful in harnessing nationalism, portraying political opposition and criticism of the government as being anti-Russian and unpatriotic. In the security realm, this allows Russian policy-makers greater flexibility than their European counterparts, in using paramilitary and military means to protect Russia's interests.

For European security actors, whilst attention is focused on military capability, it is important to consider how society–military relations shape both Russian capabilities and the constraints on the decision to use force. These elements of society–military relations include executive dominance of the political process and civilian control, the monopolization of information in security affairs by the state, support for the military as an institution and for the use of force to further Russian interests, and military successes from the past. The early post-Soviet period continues to exert an influence on Russian society–military relations and therefore its security posture. Russia lost foreign policy agency during the tumultuous democratic transition under Yeltsin. The desire to have Russia's European and global security interests respected is a direct result of its interaction with other security actors during the 1990s (e.g. bombing of Serbia despite Russian opposition) and within a security architecture defined as being anti-Russian (primarily NATO). Therefore, to understand Russian security priorities and responses, other European states and institutions have to consider both the internal dimension and the context of society–military relations.

Conclusion

Nashi and DOSAAF support the military by fulfilling functions such as military training and encouraging the development of a pro-military outlook. Moreover, Nashi, DOSAAF, and new organizations (such as the Popular Front; All-Russian Youth Community; Smart Russia and the Voluntary Movement in Support of the Army Navy and Defence-Industrial Complex) can be mobilized to promote political goals such as strengthening the military and maintaining support for the elites. Despite scandals and questions over effectiveness, the military, as a trusted Russian institution, enjoys strong popular support. This level of support, and the practical benefits that voluntary organizations afford their members, can contribute to effective society–military relations.

On the other hand, an absence of independent information sources and scrutiny of defence and security policy, in addition to a lack of overarching vision of how society–military relations should develop, are challenges in terms of militarization. Everyday militarization should therefore be viewed as a defining characteristic of contemporary society–military relations in Russia. Military capability is a core element of Putin's drive to build a strong Russia. The development of a pro-military outlook, and the fusion of patriotism and support for the elites, has created a different decision-making environment for Russian policy-makers, particularly in the area of security and when considering the use of force. European states have to take into account the different pattern of society–military relations and internal political drivers when analyzing Russian security interests and assessing possible responses.

Acknowledgements

Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the CRCEES Research Forum (University of Nottingham) and Transformation Group Seminar (University of Glasgow). The author would like to thank Stephen White, Anke Schmidt-Felzmann, Jennifer Mathers, and Brandon Valeriano for feedback on the research.

Funding

This work was supported by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) [grant number ES/I902406/1].

Notes

1. Following Webber and Mathers (2006) this paper adopts the term *society*–military relations rather than *civil*–military relations to denote the need to broaden the narrow focus on democratic civilian control.
2. The attempted coup in August 1991 was unsuccessful and demonstrates the tradition of non-intervention by the Russian military.
3. The relevant work is found predominantly within civil–military relations, Russian politics, and the democratic transition literatures.
4. The military organisation is comprised of all the state institutions tasked with the management of violence and which carry a latent threat to society due to their training and coercive power. This definition is adopted in the wider research project that this paper draws on and follows the logic of Webber and Mathers original formulation: "the term 'military' can be applied to a wide range of organisations in Russia, far beyond the limited scope of the branches of the armed forces overseen by the Ministry of Defence" (Webber and Mathers 2006, p. 8). However, in this paper the armed forces are the focus of discussion.
5. I divide militarisation into four aggregates (physical, economic, political, and social) each of which is comprised of individual indicators.
6. Everyday militarisation is an indicator within the social aggregate of militarisation.
7. DOSAAF was known as ROSTO (*Rossiiskaya oboronnaya sportivno-tekhnicheskaya organizatsiya*) from 1991–2003 and ROSTO-DOSAAF until 2009. It is the successor to the Soviet voluntary public organisations.
8. For the majority of the period under discussion the organisation was known as "Nashi"; the form which is retained in this paper. In April 2012, following reports that the Kremlin sought a more sophisticated youth movement, Nashi founder Vasilii Yakemenko announced the youth movement would be rebranded. Several Nashi projects have remained active, the umbrella structure has been "re-focused" with a new name – All-Russian Youth Community.
9. William Odom's framework for analysing Soviet public voluntary organisations is adopted here. Some of the conceptual difficulties that Odom worked to overcome are still relevant such as the tension inherent with the contemporary characterisation of DOSAAF as a "state-voluntary" organisation and the lack of private sphere in during the Soviet period.
10. *Russia 2000 Survey*, UK Data Archive reference SN 4550; *Russia 2005 Survey*, UK Data Archive reference SN 5671; *Russia 2008 Survey, n* = 2000; *Russia 2010 Survey, n* = 2000.
11. Accounts last accessed 25 February 2014.
12. The accounts are: UK Scout Association (@UKScouting); Army Cadets (@ArmyCadetsUK); Sea Cadets (@SeaCadetsUK); Air Cadets (@aircadets), last accessed 22 December 2013.
13. The Popular Front has defined itself as a "public movement" in its charter approved in June 2013. It was conceived as a vehicle for improving communication between civil society, the state, and United Russia. Given the need to maintain a youth mobilisation capacity and the strong state, pro-military ideology, it seems likely that the All-Russia Youth Community and the Popular Front would develop a mutually supportive relationship.
14. Examples of the projects include a health and exercise initiative Run After Me (*Begi za mnoi*) and Your Film About The War (a project to produce and curate video interviews with veterans).
15. Account last accessed 25 February 2014.

16. Account last accessed 2 February 2014.
17. Hashtags for "Leningrad", "brown rain", and "yellow rain" (referring to *Dozhd TV*'s poll) were trending on Twitter in Russia; "yellow rain" was the eighth most popular on 27 January 2014 (Trendinalia 2014).
18. DOSAAF has approximately 300 Facebook "likes" and approximately 50 followers on Twitter (@DOSAAF_RF). Accounts last accessed 4 March 2014.
19. In addition to the charter, DOSAAF is a key component of the "Concept for the federal system of training citizens for military service to 2020" and the "Concept of military-patriotic education of youth in DOSAAF". Patriotic education is also a specific "Federal Target Programme" with additional budget allocations.
20. The centralisation process (the consolidation of educational institutions) was supposed to increase the number of trained sergeants. This has not yet come to fruition with delays in graduation and suggestions that funding shortages would prevent the scheme being viable beyond the current cohort.
21. Discussion of the extent of corruption within DOSAAF itself is beyond the scope of this paper but is a relevant concern. The Investigative Committee has a number of open cases involving DOSAAF officials and property.
22. *Dedovshchina* is the Russian term for this phenomenon.
23. Although DOSAAF's website includes a blog and a "hints and tips" section to help conscripts prepare for basic training, conspicuous in its absence is the lack of advice on dealing with abuse (DOSAAF Website 2011a).

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